serious problem is the absence of a central protagonist, a figure that can be the major focus of the reader's attention. There is a babble of voices, each giving claim to the truth, or part of it. The diptychal form of the novel is also a calculated risk. The climax of the novel is produced when these two stories come together, and the effect is powerful. On a first reading, there is not much evident connection between them until the end. However, on the second time around, the power and control of the novelist are much more evident.

All the King's Men begins "in the shade of an olive tree by a wheat field near Perugia." The story was a play before it became the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel of 1946, and has appeared twice since then in other dramatic versions. Once more there is the typical Warren complexity: the merging of history and myth with flawlessly rendered detail of time and place; the inserted episode from a purer and more distant time, which the hero must understand before he can understand himself; and the important philosophic questions which must be answered. The three major characters are Willie Stark, "the man of fact"; Adam Stanton, "the man of idea"; and Jack Burden, friend to both of them and ultimately their destroyer. In the play *Proud Flesh* Jack had been a minor figure; in the novel he emerges as a fatalistic, wisecracking, former newspaper reporter, now special assistant to Governor Stark. Gradually the reader realizes that Jack—rather than the flamboyant, corrupt, and tragic Stark—is the true hero of the novel.

The novel opens *in medias res* as Governor Stark's entourage is tearing along the new asphalt highway he has built, leading a gaggle of reporters and photographers to take pictures of Stark revisiting his old home. There the pictures are made, but in the hours that follow word is brought that Judge Irwin has publicly withdrawn his support of Governor Stark.

Willy-nilly, Jack is dragged along in the Cadillac through the night to Burden's Landing, the Gulf Coast town where Jack grew up; it is also the home of Judge Irwin and Jack's childhood friends, Anne and Adam Stanton. In the dialogue that takes place in the

Judge's home, many of the tensions that make up the novel are stated, notably that between the Judge as the spokesman of the unbending morality of the *ancien regime* and Willie Stark as the apostle of pragmatic compromise, whose ends always justify his means. Willie states his belief that humanity makes up its laws as it goes along, tailoring them to fit its needs. The Judge is unmoved. Driving back through the swampy night, Willie orders Jack to "get the goods" on Judge Irwin—to find the one false step that Willie is convinced every man has made. Jack suggests that Judge Irwin may be an exception, but Willie replies that man "is conceived in sin and born in corruption and he passeth from the stink of the didie to the stench of the shroud. There is always something." There is indeed something, and Jack finds it. But it proves to be more than he bargained for.

In the section which follows, time-shift and manipulation permit Jack to tell his own story. Here we learn of the details of his life in Burden's Landing: his teen-age love affair with Anne Stanton; her eventual rejection of him because of his lack of purpose; his life as a college student, deliberately made as grubby as he could to distress his mother; his mother's many husbands; his failure to find meaning in the Cass Mastern story, which is the focus for his unfinished Ph.D. dissertation. Here also is his life as a young reporter and his introduction to the underworld of politics and his first meeting with Willie Stark—"Cousin Willie from the country." The details of Willie's improbable rise to power are traced in conjunction with Jack's account of his own philosophic stages. Eventually we come to Governor Stark's decision to build a great medical center which will be free to everyone.

Willie wants the best of everything for his hospital. The best of the medical profession happens to be Adam Stanton, brother to Anne and a close friend of Jack's in their young days at Burden's Landing. Like Tobias Sears in *Band of Angels*, Adam has "nobility like a disease." Like many others in Warren's fiction, he has a concept of the world in his head, and when anything fails to conform to that concept, he rejects it. He has only withering contempt for

Stark and everything he stands for. Meanwhile, Jack has found "the goods" on Judge Irwin: as a young lawyer and state attorney, Irwin once dismissed a suit against a large corporation and was later rewarded by being made vice-president and general counsel of that corporation. The man he replaced eventually killed himself. Governor Stanton, the aristocratic and highly moral father of Anne and Adam, did not share in the money, nor did he approve of Irwin's action; but as governor of the state, he did prevent the exposure and prosecution of an old friend. After examining the photostated documents in the case, Adam decides there is no reason why he should not become director of the hospital and increase his own scope for doing good, provided the whole thing is left clear of politics. Jack does not foresee, and does not discover for some time, the effect on Anne Stanton of his exposing her father's role in the case. She, too, seeing the evidence of her father's complicity, decides there is no reason "not to," that is, not to relax her own standards. She becomes the mistress of Governor Stark.

Events move on. Tom Stark, the governor's son, is a superb athlete but otherwise worthless. He is involved in a series of paternity cases, the latest of which becomes serious when Willie's political enemies learn of it. Willie demands "the goods" on Judge Irwin to force Irwin's help in the matter. Jack shows the evidence to the Judge. Later that day, in his bedroom in his mother's home in Burden's Landing, Jack is awakened by her screaming. He finds that Judge Irwin has killed himself. He learns also that the Judge was his true father.

Forced by political pressure, Willie is compelled to grant some graft in the construction of the new hospital to Tiny Duffy and Gummy Larsen. More and more Willie is forced to realize that he cannot control events. Tom is injured in a football game, and in the operating room all Adam Stanton's skill cannot help him. Tom will be a vegetable for the rest of his life.

This crisis is the turning point for Willie Stark. He ignores everything else in his determination to make the hospital a memorial

to his son. More than ever, he is determined that the hospital shall be "pure" and "clean." Tiny Duffy is told brusquely that the graft will not be forthcoming. Through devious patterns of betrayal, Tiny informs Adam Stanton that Anne is the mistress of the governor and that this was the price of his appointment as director of the hospital. Adam goes to the capitol, shoots Willie, and is gunned down by the bodyguards. The remainder of the book concerns those who are left, notably Jack, whose continuing effort will be to find some sustaining meaning in his life.

Jack begins to see how his total rejection of the past ("history") had paralyzed his ability to live in the present and how Adam's illusory worship of the past had done the same thing to him. Willie's greatness had been dissipated and ultimately lost because dynamism and power without control or restraint lead to corruption. Life is, Jack begins to see, a striving "in an agony of will" to move from incompleteness to fullness. He had brought Willie and Adam together: "Adam Stanton, whom he came to call the man of idea, and Willie Stark, whom he came to call the man of fact, were doomed to destroy each other, just as each was doomed to try to use the other and to yearn toward and try to become the other, because each was incomplete with the terrible division of the age" (p. 462). Jack has the pattern whole now and understands how his brass-bound idealism, and what he calls the "Great Sleep" and the "Great Twitch," were all tactics of evasion. He had rejected the past, in part, because he believed his vain, idle mother and his weak, good father had denied him the kind of paternal security Anne and Adam had. When he destroyed their image of Governor Stanton, all that followed was the result. Jack might say with the Thomas Jefferson of *Brother to Dragons:*

> Now I should hope to find the courage to say
> That the dream of the future is not
> Better than the fact of the past, no matter how terrible
> For without the fact of the past we cannot dream
> the future (p. 193).

The idealism which allowed him to ignore moral imperatives ("nothing matters, because it ain't real") is gone. Understanding at last the dynamics of responsibility that sent men like Cass Mastern to war and an early death, he likens the world to a great spider-web; when the web is brushed at one point, the entire structure is alerted. The world is all of one piece: "It does not matter whether or not you meant to brush the web of things. Your happy foot or your gay wing may have brushed it ever so lightly, but what happens always happens and there is the spider, bearded black and with its great faceted eyes glittering like mirrors in the sun, or like God's eye . . ." (p. 200). To Jack's assertion that man cannot help "whatever happens," Hugh Miller, Stark's impeccable Attorney General, replies, "History is blind, but man is not." Hugh Miller will be getting back into politics some day, Jack thinks, and Jack wants to be around to hold his coat. By then, he and Anne will be ready to "go into the convulsion of the world, out of history into history, and the awful responsibility of Time" (p. 464).

All the King's Men is Warren's most important novel, but while it subsequently won the Pulitzer Prize in fiction, many of the early reviewers were far from complimentary. Granted that journalistic reviewers are simply that, some of the evaluations still seem unnecessarily stupid and incompetent. For the most part, the gross misreadings grew out of certain nonliterary preconceptions, primarily socioeconomic ones. Reviewers for the *New York Times*, *PM*, and the *Nation* issued passionate warnings that the novel is a tract defending fascism and home-grown dictatorship. Others went further, stating flatly that the book is a whitewash of Huey Long and warned the reader against him even though he had been dead seven years. Others, worried about truth, feared that Mr. Warren had not been *biographically* accurate enough in his account of Huey's life.

If such evaluations seem incredible now, it is more incredible that they should continue to flourish; but they do. As recently as 1964, Mr. Warren published an essay in the *Yale Review* explaining once again the exact circumstances of the genesis of Willie Stark's story and his own relationship to the historical events of that time.

Another stumbling block has been the philosophy and the rhetoric. The early reviews showed a general tendency to confuse the author with his characters and then belabor the one for something the others say. There was often a peevish dislike for some remark Jack Burden had made, but a curious blindness to the *changes* in Jack or the progress of his soul. The objections to the rhetoric were various, but several reviewers felt that Mr. Warren should use a plainer, flatter diction; apparently, they missed most of the irony and the *variety* of the voices. Evidently a versatility of style is as bad as a versatility of genre. However gradually, responsible criticism has worn these views away, replacing them with evaluations that give due weight to the moral and philosophical questions which are the novel's true focus.

In 1950, four years after *All the King's Men*, Warren published *World Enough and Time*, a novel set in Kentucky in the early years of the nineteenth century. The first problem to be cleared away is any simpleminded confusion between this novel and the drugstore historical romance. Warren does not consider himself a historical novelist, but simply insists that he uses whatever means have come to hand. In *World Enough and Time*, the means consist of a once-famous episode in the annals of politics and crime, the so-called Kentucky Tragedy. The original event was highly sensational, a political murder with overtones of sex and betrayal. The trial was spectacular, involving monumental perjury on both sides. Several famous American writers, including Poe and Simms, have written literary versions of it, of which it is safe to say that they were content to let the melodrama remain an end in itself.

Warren's version is something more than melodrama. *World Enough and Time*, ostensibly a costume novel, becomes Warren's most profoundly philosophical novel. The data of history is all

there: the frontier rawness, the meanness, the violence (both political and personal), and, above all, the masterful re-creation of the speech of that time, both spoken and written. There is also the burning political issue of the time: Old Court versus New Court, which is very nearly an analogue for the two opposing theories of law and order in *All the King's Men* (Adam Stanton representing the law as an inviolable code, Willie Stark representing the law as a flexible instrument to serve the needs of the people). Seductive as this data is, it is simply data. The surface of the times is used as a mirror, held up to the personal story. Like Hamlet, Jeremiah Beaumont, the protagonist, feels the burning need to have his story told, all of it, for whatever good it may do. The novel tells this story in all its complexity: its lies, its self-deceptions, and its burning honesty.

Individual characters aside, there are three major voices in the novel. One is the narrative (the "confession") of Beaumont himself, another is the "straight" voice of the historian-narrator, and the third is the ironic, savage commentary of the same historian. By subtle and skillful control over these voices and the other content, the author is able to maintain a most effective tension between past and present, between archaic extravagance and modern violence, between history and the present age of perpetual crisis. Jerry Beaumont, stripped of his rhetoric, his manners, and his self-deception, has only one problem: how to be.

The problem is complex enough in any age. It seems somewhat more acute for Jerry than for us only because of the time and place in which he lived. The times were uncertain and the country and its people were still unformed. Buckskin and broadcloth might meet and mingle, and might at times be worn by the same man. A man might step out of muddy boots after a day's plowing and read himself to sleep over Blackstone, or Plato in Greek. In such a society, made entirely of people who were the next generation after the ikon-smashing Revolution and were emigrants from wherever they came from, a young man might be more than usually uncertain of what he is or, more important, what he ought to become. Jerry's head is stuffed with Platonism and notions of chivalry; more than anything else, he wants to perform some great deed that will lift him out of the "ruck of things."

Jerry *feels* more acutely than most men, or so it seems to him. He resents his father, a driving, unfulfilled Revolutionary War soldier. His mother is a gentle, suffering creature, whose runaway marriage left her cut off from her own father, a wealthy aristocrat gone to seed. When Jerry goes for a long visit to his Grandfather Marcher's run-down mansion, the old man arrogantly offers to make Jerry his heir if he will renounce his dead father's name and change it to Marcher. Jerry indignantly refuses, and Marcher spurns Jerry forever. We feel that Jerry's decision is right, but it costs him his last chance for any sort of economic start in life. It also dooms his mother to a life of penury on the Beaumont farm.

In the process of development Jerry goes through several bouts with evangelical religion. His aesthetic sense grows also, but he has in no way found himself. At seventeen he is introduced to Colonel Cassius Fort, a lawyer, Jeffersonian, and congressman. Born into very poor circumstances, Fort has become a scholar, a gentleman, and a statesman by the power of his intellect and the sheer desire to become worthy. Here indeed is a father-figure worthy of emulation. Jerry becomes Fort's law clerk and spiritual son.

Although still personally unfulfilled, Jerry does make friends and acquaintances. There is Wilkie Barron, like Jerry a half-orphan and not yet settled in a career. But Wilkie does have a great cause: he is an active pro-replevin man, as is Fort. Jerry has an actual distaste for the hurly-burly of politics, but on election day he surprises himself by the violence with which he comes to the aid of his friends in a public brawl. Through Wilkie he hears of Rachel Jordon, a beautiful and sad young woman now living in reduced circumstances. He also learns the shameful fact that she has had a stillborn child whose father was Fort. Jerry wins her confidence through elaborate subterfuges, and eventually draws

from her the entire story. The time and place being what it is, she reacts to Jerry's skillful probing as might be expected. She persuades herself that she wants Fort killed.

Jerry confronts Fort and slaps him publicly, but Fort refuses to fight his "son" in a duel. He leaves Frankfort by stealth to avoid another confrontation. Jerry has convinced himself that his action in wiping out the stain on Rachel's honor will be a pure one, undertaken with the loftiest, most disinterested of motives.

Jerry's courtship of Rachel begins, often under the spiteful and peeping eyes of her emotionally disturbed old mother. The old woman dies upstairs at the very moment that Jerry possesses Rachel physically. After the funeral they are married and begin to enjoy the simple pleasure of their life together. As an idyll, or costume romance, the story might have ended here, but Jerry is tortured by the thought that Fort still lives and further tortured by the whispered rumors that he, Jerry, has married Rachel for her property. The pressures mount: Fort announces that he has switched sides in the all-consuming public issue and will now support the conservative anti-replevin group. Rachel is now placid and happily pregnant; at last she can reproach Jerry for having forced her to say she wanted Fort killed.

Then, as the heat of the campaign rises, two printed political broadsides reach the house. One publicizes Fort's seduction of Rachel; the other, signed with Fort's name, says that the father of Rachel's child was a mulatto slave. In shock, Rachel miscarries, and in her delirium rails at both men for filling her womb with death. With some dramatic irony, the reader can see the impurity of Jerry's motives, but Jerry cannot. He decides that since Fort will not fight him, even when insulted, he must murder him by stealth.

Jerry, disguised, finds Fort and stabs him to death. He tries to establish his innocence on the ride home by giving to any who will listen wild and garbled accounts of the murder. Foolishly, but in keeping with his guise of noble innocence, Jerry even consents to

ride back to Frankfort with a self-appointed posse. (It should be noted that, both in history and in the novel, passions were much higher than usual because of the burning political issue.) Mountains of perjury pile up on both sides. Jerry is indicted and found guilty.

Rachel lives with Jerry in his jail cell while he awaits execution. He is occupied with a vigorous assertive lust for Rachel and with a compulsion to complete the journal which not only will vindicate him but will also, he hopes secretly, help explain to himself what has happened. When his old mentor, Dr. Burnham, comes to "read the truth" in Jerry's face, Jerry reproaches the ill and helpless old man for ever teaching him the noble Roman code of honor and demands that he furnish Jerry and Rachel with poison to "cheat the hangman." The old man mistakenly brings laudanum, which acts as an emetic; and instead of the high, noble, Roman death that Jerry had imagined, there is only ignoble, degrading helplessness and nausea.

On the night before the execution, Wilkie engineers a successful jailbreak and sends them far into the wilderness to hide in a nest of cutthroats ruled over by Grand Boz, a humpbacked old pirate. Misery and degradation are complete. Rachel slowly goes mad, repeatedly stealing the baby of a diseased slut because she believes it is her own. Jerry is content to sleep with the slut. He contemplates his consequent venereal sore and decides it is his link with universal mankind. He wants to sink into nature, even this "nature" at its most depraved. This is his final attempt to find innocence.

During his trial, there had been a frantic search for the copy of a handbill signed by Fort which would have proved extreme provocation. When a Frankfort cutthroat seeks Jerry out to sell him a copy of it, he is hardly able to summon interest. But his torpor is broken by the discovery that Fort had nothing to do with the handbill; Wilkie and Skrogg have fabricated it as political strategy. Jerry becomes so enraged that he accuses Rachel of being in the con-

spiracy. Her defense is the counter-accusation that none of it would have happened without Jerry's insistence. She commits suicide, and, in a moment of clear-mindedness, forgives him.

His mind clear at last of self-delusion, Jerry is able to see Wilkie's evil as a mask of the world itself, quite apart from Jerry Beaumont. He has his own crimes to atone for, which he sees in perfect clarity. He understands that his murder of Fort is only the tangible result; his real crimes are arrogance, self-love, and spiritual pride. He sees the stages of what might be called his metaphysical delusions: from the notion that the pure idea is everything to the violence of making the world conform to the idea when he killed Fort and finally to his attempt among the cutthroats to sink totally into "nature," including all forms of degradation. Completing the last entries in his journal, he writes: "There must be a way whereby the word becomes flesh. There must be a way whereby the flesh becomes word. Whereby loneliness becomes communion without contamination. Whereby contamination becomes purity without exile" (p. 460). Seen one way, these words are the ultimate statement of Jerry's kind of Romanticism, the yearning after something which can never be.

He begins the journey back to Frankfort in a final renunciation of the doctrine of self. On the way he is murdered by thugs sent by Wilkie, then decapitated, and his head is taken by them so that they may claim the reward. With this final turn he becomes truly the tragic protagonist. Throughout, we have watched him as a clodhopper Hamlet or a backwoods Byronic hero who kills Fort, kills Rachel, and now, at last, is ready to accept punishment. We share in the irony of the historian-narrator who regards these antics. Alongside Jerry's romantic excess, which leads him to murder, there is at the same time a searching eagerness, a striving toward something greater than himself. The journal says in part: "I had longed to do justice in the world, and what was worthy of praise. Even if my longing was born in vanity and nursed in pride, is that longing to be wholly damned? For we do not damn the poor

infant dropped by a drab in a ditch, but despite the mother's fault and tarnishment we know its innocence and human worth. And in my crime and vainglory of self is there no worth lost? Oh, was I worth nothing, and my agony? Was all for naught?" (p. 465). The commentary of the historian-narrator becomes savage. He contrasts the reverence the Indians once had for Kentucky, where the gods lived in the great caves, with the fat-headed commercial complacency of the 1950's in the United States. Was all the agony in the dark and passionate history of this continent, he seems to ask, worth nothing? And in his own voice he asks again: was all for naught?

In general, the early reviews of *World Enough and Time* were similar to the early estimates of *All the King's Men*. There was the general complaint about Warren's unfortunate decision to write about the South, and the usual unfavorable comments on the rhetoric. A new distortion was raised by those who chose to evaluate the book as straight historical fiction. They were able to point out that Warren had changed the names of several people, invented others, and had generally messed up the facts. What these reviewers were unable to see is that *World Enough and Time* is a philosophical novel, and that its major significance lies in just those questions which are neither past nor present because they are both, and for which there are no easy, prefabricated answers. These values are timeless, and a work of art will endure or fail in its treatment of them.

One factor which does demand serious discussion is the question of excess: is the novel too long, too rich, too overburdened by the complexity of its scenes, its characters, and its voices? Granted that this novel grows out of the clash of contradictory ideas, ideals, politics, moralities, and philosophies (as does most of "real life"), is the net effect one of confusion for the reader? Most probably, the answer is no. Every detail has a relevance and is a reinforcement. What we must avoid is the fate of the nameless British editor who cut the entire Cass Mastern episode out of a British edition of *All*

the King's Men because it was perfectly obvious to *him* that it was irrelevant to the story.

"When shall I be dead and rid/ Of the wrong my father did?" This epigram from Housman opens *Band of Angels* (1955). Since this book is a Warren novel, the epigram might be rephrased: when will I be free? The time span in the novel reaches from just before the Civil War to some twenty years after it. The novel is the story of Amantha Starr, born on her father's plantation in Kentucky, educated at Oberlin, and concerned with the central problem of finding her way to a human freedom she feels she has never had. As in *World Enough and Time*, the pages teem with action, conflict, and vivid characterization, none of it gratuitous or external to the meaning of the story. As with Jeremiah Beaumont, Amantha has her analogue in history, or certainly in legend. Petted and adored by her indulgent father, she is educated in the Abolitionist fervor of the small Ohio college. Full of these semi-digested sentiments, her life changes dramatically when her father dies. At the graveside she is seized by the sheriff as a chattel against her father's bankrupt estate. Amantha is actually the daughter, not of her father's putative wife, but of Rennie, his beautiful, near-white mistress. Sold and taken to New Orleans by a dealer, she is resold in the slave market to one Hamish Bond, middle-aged, wealthy, and a former slave-runner himself. She is confused and offended by his kindness and consideration. Amantha (usually referred to as Manty) both identifies with and resents the slight tinge in her blood. Again and again she expresses the longing to be free, which means, at least in the beginning, to be legally and technically not a slave.

On one occasion she tries to run away, but is brought back by Rau-Ru, Bond's *k'la* and foster-son. Without being accused, she admits she was running away. That night, during a violent storm, Bond comes to her room to close the windows. Wordlessly, they cling to each other. The word she uses afterwards is rape, but she will come to wonder who was the victim. Bond offers to send her to Cincinnati and freedom, but she refuses.

Abraham Lincoln is elected president, and the war begins, opening conflict in a personal as well as national sense. The slaves become restless with the rumors of freedom; loyaltics of all kinds become divided. Eventually, the federal gunboats subdue the ports, and New Orleans falls. Rau-Ru takes to violence. Bond, in an enfolded episode, tells of his young manhood in Africa as a slave-trader, when he rescued an African child from certain death; that child was Rau-Ru, who has resented owing his life to Bond. Bond gives Manty her freedom, wishing never to hear from her again.

When New Orleans is occupied by Ben Butler's troops, Manty is classified as a woman of the town. She is rescued by Seth Parton, once her sanctimonious classmate at Oberlin and now a federal officer. With him is Tobias Sears, son of a millionaire robber-baron and Abolitionist, who discusses Transcendentalism with Manty while Negroes starve in the streets. Eventually he asks her to marry him. Tobias is possessed of nobility like a disease, and he is torn between his commitment to total emancipation and Emerson's warning that "imperfect men must fulfill the perfection of idea."

The disorder increases, and violence of all kinds grows. In the seething unrest of Radical retaliation, Tobias draws down the wrath of all factions by his unwavering idealism. General rioting takes place, and Manty is taken deep into the swamps to find Rau-Ru, who now has a blue uniform and a new identity: Lt. Oliver Cromwell Jones. Rau-Ru is preparing to hang Bond. The rope around his neck, Bond condemns Manty as one of his "niggers" and jumps. Later, when Rau-Ru's group is captured by a lynch mob, he saves Manty from death by declaring that she is white. She returns to New Orleans expecting that Tobias will reject her for her long absence, only to find that, wounded and unconscious, he has not even known she was gone.

Tobias's father eventually disinherits him for betrayal of his own class interest; he cannot, as so many did, remain both a Transcendentalist and a robber-baron. Drifting, rootless, Tobias and Manty settle in St. Louis for a while; he loses more and more friends and material advantage as he continues to demand public and national

support for the ideals of 1863. They move westward to Kansas. Manty still longs for her freedom and wonders when it will be given to her. One major turning point occurs when Josh Lounberry, a Negro who has grown rich by inventing a curler to put kinks in the hair of white people, comes to rescue his father, Old Slop, the local garbage collector. Confronted with violence, Tobias defends Josh and Slop with his bare fists and is bloodied. Later, he helps honor Old Slop with a ritual scrubbing. Now, we understand, Tobias can accept his "failure"—the failure to set the whole world right. Unlike Beaumont or Adam Stanton, Tobias has lived to accept his middling success as adequate. He has never had the right to feel shame because he has not achieved what not even God has attempted. Amantha begins to realize that no one can be *given* freedom. Freedom is a condition that one gives one's self; otherwise it is never found. Her father, she sees at last, did not issue her free papers because he loved her; to do so would be public, legal notice of her Negro blood in that time and place. Never again, she says, will anyone call her "poor little Manty."

In Amantha's veins, one critic observed, "whole histories run." Yet other critics complain of what seems unacceptable to them: that Manty remains pure victim and fades from vividness in the presence of the men who are her exploiters and her victims. Yet, after careful consideration, their judgment proves faulty. In all of Warren's characteristic brilliance of surface—the detail of episode and action, of war, destruction, and betrayal—one theme runs steadily: that freedom is a matter of the individual consciousness, or of the soul. This freedom is not, and cannot be, imposed from outside by anyone or any agency. It must grow from within; it grows from inner conviction, firmly free from illusion, cant, or evasion. In retrospect, it seems incontestable that Manty remains a "slave" so long because, to free herself, she must give up her fondest delusions: what she was subjected to because of her father's indolence and what society has done to her because of her blood. To cling to these resentments is to remain enslaved. Thus,

Amantha and "history" coexist in this novel, and each becomes allegory and exemplum for the other. Warren was to turn again to these matters a few years later in *The Legacy of the Civil War* (1961), whose content is indicated by the title and which serves perfectly as a formal historical account of the ideals, ideas, and betrayals that tortured Amantha and those around her and that live on in the tortured history of recent times.

In *The Cave* (1959) Warren returns to the second half of the twentieth century. The reader is not going to be very far into *The Cave* before the strange prisoners he sees moving in front of his eyes will invite comparison with the prisoners chained in that earlier cave devised by Plato. (It might be useful to note also the historical episode of the death of Floyd Collins, entrapped in Sand Cave, Kentucky, in 1925. This event is "placed" outside the novel by Ike Sumpter's reference to it.) By a partial shifting of Plato's figure, the prisoners are all outside the cave, but are looking into it, seeking in the trapped Jasper Harrick some illumination of the shadows which are their own delusions. For some, but not all, the illumination will come.

The plot can be stated briefly. Jasper Harrick is a loner who is seeking himself. He hunts, cave-crawls, and goes to the Korean war, but none of these is enough to enable him to find himself. The novel opens as his younger brother, Monty, discovers Jasper trapped deep in a cave. The structure of the novel is the response of the other characters to this emergency. Access to the spot is so limited that only one person can crawl to it. That person is Ike Sumpter—small-town intellectual, college student, and anti-hero of the novel. Ike has his own motive in what he does. He deliberately delays Jasper's rescue in order to bring in the national media to exploit the event, which leads, as he had hoped, straight to a job on Madison Avenue. With time-shift and interior consciousness, the past history and spiritual state of the others are explored. The novel ends when, with full exploitation and network coverage, the death of Jasper Harrick is announced. The mobs which have been

waiting respond in an orgy of fighting, drunkenness, and barnyard sex: the blind need to assert their own continued existence. Some of the prisoners we have seen have found a complete or partial liberation. Others have not.

The changes are rung on such themes as blindness, inwardness, and darkness. One form of inwardness is the attempt to know oneself through the exploration of another's body, the use of sex as an instrument or process. This inwardness is self-defeating, unless the prisoner can grope past his blind lust to a genuine and sustaining love. In this seeking for definition of self, the fictional character is established firmly and realistically; in the working-out of how each one loves or does not love, succeeds or does not succeed in transcending self, the novel completes itself. The fortunate ones learn from the experience of death the condition of life.

Wilderness (1961) is a marked departure from the other novels. It is a stripped, direct narrative, done without very much introspection, self-searching, stream of consciousness, or enfolded counter-plot. There is very little that even the most hagridden reviewer could find to label magnolia and moonshine. The story is that of Adam Rosenzweig, who walks away from his home in a Bavarian village to fight as a hired mercenary in the Union Army in the American Civil War. Adam carries with him his phylacteries, a prayer book, and a shawl. Unclear in what he hopes to find, he knows in part what he is leaving behind. The novel opens on the day his father is buried. Adam has always lived in his father's shadow, and will continue to for some time. The father is an outcast among outcasts in the ghetto, a spectacular failure among those who have never been free to dare very much. The father has sacrificed, in the name of freedom and justice, his own freedom, his health, and, he is forced to believe, his faith as well. The brief glory that began on the barricades of Berlin was followed by thirteen years of prison. His brother forces him to admit that his life has been a blasphemy; he has trusted the justice of man more than the Law of God.

Adam carries with him another stigma. He has a deformed foot, but a cobbler has cunningly devised a boot that will conceal the defect. All goes well until a chance roll of the ship betrays him to another cripple, who in turn betrays Adam's secret. Yet another man, a common sailor, teaches Adam how to deceive the officials and avoid being returned to Europe. There are nightmare experiences in the streets of New York. He is caught up in the draft riots and is confused to see a mob lynching Negroes rather than going to war to free them. Unfit for soldiering, Adam seeks another role. He is taken in by Blaustein, a merchant prince, to replace a son killed in battle. He moves on, becoming an assistant on a sutler's wagon—a witness to the depravity and degradation of the war, but not yet of it. His companions are Jedeen Hawksworth, now a sutler but once a planter driven out of his native North Carolina, and Mose Talbutt, a runaway slave branded with a W for "worthless." He sees "Millie the Mutton" stripped and whipped publicly because she spread venereal disease in the camp; he comes to know Monmorancy Pugh, a draft-dodger who kills conscriptors to avoid being drafted to kill men in battle. Trapped at last in the confusion of the Wilderness, surrounded by burning woods and the screams of the wounded, Adam is confronted by a handful of ragged, scarecrow Confederates. To save the lives of the men around him (and his own), he kills a Confederate soldier.

Adam, the prelapsarian, becomes Cain, his brother's slayer. But Adam's act is the fortunate fall, the eating of the apple of knowledge. He can face the realization that he has killed. He can even see that, given the circumstances, he could do it again. He is baptized into the human condition and renamed Old Slewfoot, both for his flawed foot and as one who slew the enemy. He freely tells himself that at the moment of killing he hated the man, but by this realization he knows for the first time the power of forgiveness. In the licensed violence and mass murder of war, Adam has learned at last what it means to be human.

Wilderness was published the same year as *The Legacy of the Civil War*, and in some ways it reflects and reinforces the reasoned, reflective content of that book. There Warren traces the steps leading to the polarized and paralyzing attitudes which developed in both North and South. Both were unbending, and both were self-contradictory. Adam Rosenzweig has fallen—or, rather, stumbled—between two such polarities, missing them both. He has learned that he (like his father before him) is not merely the victim of circumstance and the sum of what has happened to him.

Flood (1964) is subtitled "A Romance of Our Time." In it, Warren returns to the modern world, not the Depression years of Willie Stark, but the decade of the 1960's. With the subtitle, the novel runs the same calculated risk as did *World Enough and Time*. The risk is that the reader will take the "romance" as the end in itself. If the reader has seen only Jeremiah's posturing, high-flown diction, and extravagant actions, then he has indeed seen only another technicolor melodrama. The reader must take in the philosophic fullness of *Flood*. He must be conscious of the irony which gives adequate perspective to reveal that the errors of the protagonist Bradwell Tolliver (for one) are errors, and that his most public success is his deepest failure.

Fiddlersburg is a small crossroads in Middle Tennessee, dating back a century and a half. When the floodgates of the new TVA dam are closed, the water will eventually cover Fiddlersburg. The characters in the novel are persons who are present in the town during the last year of its life. Most of them have lived there always; they will be relocated a few miles away and be generously compensated by the federal government. Others have come from Hollywood to make a documentary about the flooding of the town. When the year is over, they have all gone their separate ways. This is the *donnée*. The time span covers only the present generation. Warren has chosen deliberately just such a limited arena in which to illuminate his vision of human significance. His method is to establish the tensions and polarities between the true and the false

in art, in aspiration and desire, and in human love in all its manifestations. Ultimately he shows how all our choices or rejections flow from a basic theological awareness or lack of it. The novel is infused with a powerful and desolate sense of alienation; but in every case the aloneness is what the actor has earned by his choice between flesh and spirit, the self and the other, the self and God.

In a year or two the town will vanish as though it had never existed. This fact releases action on several levels. The water is there, and its slow rising is freighted with images of both flooding and redemption. "I pray," says Brother Potts, the fundamentalist preacher who is trying not to die of cancer before he can lead the final memorial service for the town, "I pray to know that the lives we lived are blessed." Having this awareness is one acid test for each protagonist. Individual response to the passing of Fiddlersburg is another. Significantly, those who are indifferent to the death of the town have failed at every essential human effort. This is not to say that the town itself is sentimentalized. The shabbiness of what might be called its cultural resources is documented. ("Fiddlersburg," says the lawyer Cottshill, "is where God forgot to wind His watch.") Sentimental naturalism is parodied in the nastiness of some of the lower forms of human life who move and speak with all of Warren's customary *brio* of detail and dialogue. Thus, it is difficult to paraphrase adequately the exact nature of that blessedness which shines through the fabric of undistinguished mortality which is Fiddlersburg. Nonetheless, the blessedness is there, and some—even a stranger like Yasha Jones, the Hollywood genius, who has never seen Fiddlersburg before—feel it powerfully. Others like Bradwell Tolliver, who grew up there, cannot feel it at all.

As Warren so often shows, experience can be fulfilled and redeemed only in a maturity of realization and acceptance ("the urgency to know the meaning of experience"). A brief account such as this can do little more than suggest the patterns of influence and counter-influence in the lives of the major characters. The

At the end of the novel, Brad has performed acts which have saved the lives of others and almost killed him. The reader understands that there are "gratuitous acts" in the standard Existential sense, but Brad does not understand why he did as he did. In a powerful scene in the last few pages, he watches the final memorial service for Fiddlersburg, realizing that everyone but him has achieved some deep and adequate resolution of his life. Watching Brother Potts, hearing imperfectly the shouted words of blessedness, he cannot understand why Potts has gained some sort of victory even though he will now die of cancer, while Bradwell Tolliver will have to go on, wearily performing over and over the trivial actions of physical life. He says, in his inwardness, "I cannot find the connection between what I was and what I am. I have not found the human necessity." Dimly he perceives that there is one thing he might do: he could try to keep Fiddlersburg, all of it, the good and evil, the living and dead, intact in his memory. Soon memory will be the only place where Fiddlersburg exists. If he could do this without calculation or use, it would be a beginning at least.

The treatment given *Flood* by the reviewers was all too predictable. One national news weekly headlined their notice "bourbon and baccy" (their spelling), which is a fair summary of the review itself. The Sunday *New York Times* chose as its reviewer a young man best known at the time as the author of a book on Winnie the Pooh. In all the publications on which the intelligent nonspecialist must rely to guide him, there was little, if any, indication of 1) the fact that *Flood* is a work of profound philosophical and thematic resonance; 2) what these themes are; and 3) that any ultimate understanding of the work is best found in relation to the work that has preceded it. Slowly, and again as usual, the literary quarterlies came out with their extended, in-depth, professional critical evaluations. These later essays, simply because they are based on a competent, professional awareness, do correct the earlier, commercial reviews.

Certainly there is little in *Flood* to detain a reader nurtured on *Peyton Place* or *The Exhibitionist*. If irony passes over his head, if the gentleness of creatures like Maggie escapes him, if the passing of a crossroads like Fiddlersburg is not his problem, then *Flood* is not for him. Nothing much happens in the novel except a rape and murder (offstage and long ago), a jailbreak, and another attempted murder. Most of the characters are middle-aged, and many of them are shabby. What does happen in *Flood* has been summarized in the last few pages. Specific and relevant critical questions are as follows: 1) are all those philosophic and thematic resonances clear to the reader, once he has done his homework; and 2) does the book succeed in what it attempts to do? The answer to both is yes.

No examination of the works of a writer as prolific as Warren can do justice to all the work. Throughout this brief study, reference has been made to certain of the nonfiction prose works such as *John Brown: The Making of a Martyr* and *The Legacy of the Civil War*. The other major works in this category, exclusive of textbooks and children's books, are *Segregation: The Inner Conflict in the South* (1956); *Selected Essays* (1958); and *Who Speaks for the Negro?* (1965). *Segregation*, which he calls a conversation with "the voices in my blood," grew out of what must be the response of any intelligent and articulate Southerner to the events in the 1950's. It includes historical analysis and interviews. Even at that early stage of the movement toward real emancipation for the Negro, there was one extremely penetrating insight. The problem for white Southerners, Warren concluded, was not learning to live with the Negro; it was learning to live with themselves.

Who Speaks for the Negro? is a much thicker book, but may in the long run be a less permanent one. It is composed of interviews with many well-known and other, less well-known Negro leaders who could be reached through the end of 1964. Its main focus is to answer the question put in the title. The answer then (as now) is that no one leader or group can speak for all. In pass-

ing, it must be noted that in the tragic and pathetic history of the 1960's, this data was obsolete before it could reach print (a point quite evident to Warren). It will remain, however, solid and important documentation for the way certain people (some of them now dead) felt and believed at that one moment of rapidly changing history.

Selected Essays are those major, full-length critical studies (as distinct from countless reviews) which Mr. Warren has wanted to preserve in book form. There is the essay on Joseph Conrad, already referred to; a major study of *A Farewell to Arms*; essays on Katherine Anne Porter, Eudora Welty, and Robert Frost; a two-part review of Malcolm Cowley's *Faulkner* that turned into a major essay; and the well-known "Pure and Impure Poetry." Space forbids any attempt to describe or convey the reasoned, closely packed content of these essays. The serious reader will find them for himself.

There remains the poetry. No one who knows Warren's work, or even his textbooks, would attempt the heresy of paraphrase here. Nor will it do to make up a list, however extended, which would attempt to classify the poems by style, theme, or form. In general, the poetic canon consists of the lyric poems, early and late; the longer narratives, such as "The Ballad of Billie Potts"; and *Brother to Dragons* (1953). *Brother to Dragons* is clearly one of the more important book-length poems of the twentieth century. Recently (1966), the poems from the five previous collections, plus some important new ones, were brought together in a handsome new volume, *Selected Poems: New and Old, 1923-1966*. Needless to say, a collection like this, covering so many years, is a document of major importance.

By the time he was eighteen years old, Warren had published poems in places of significance. A little later, while barely old enough to vote, he began to be known as a Fugitive, which was to say that he could write excellent minor poems in the style of Donne or Marvell. Even today, to read again such early poems as "Bearded Oaks" or "Love's Parable" is to be reminded of what precious

little jewels they are, with their wit, their expanded metaphors (always effective and under control), their inverted syntax and deliberate archaisms. In this same period, Warren and many others were to some extent influenced by Eliot and Pound. These influences are found most often in image and diction, less often in ideas and ultimate conclusions. Here too, with the advantage of hindsight, we can see the beginning of those great themes which are the groundswell of the major fiction: the changes time brings, the crisis of identity, the fear that naturalism may be all, and the need for a right relationship with the things of this world. By the publication of *Thirty-Six Poems* (1935), Warren had already begun to find his own voice. He was ready for a change, a growth in new directions. In *Eleven Poems on the Same Theme* (1942), the new directions were evident; and in *Selected Poems, 1923-1943* (1944), Warren emerged as a fully matured poet, secure in his own style and viewpoint.

This new collection reprinted most of the poems in the previous volumes, but was notable for "The Ballad of Billie Potts" and "Mexico is a Foreign Country: Five Studies in Naturalism." These are major units, and each represents a departure from the tight formality of many of the earlier poems, showing a wider and more personal diction and content. These poems are witty, often deliberately vulgar, and sometimes consciously banal. They show also a greater inclusiveness, a willingness to take on "unpoetic" subject matter. "The Ballad of Billie Potts" is a retelling of a Kentucky folktale. Billie, a prodigal son who has been trained by his father to murder travelers for their money, bungles his first attempt and has to flee the country. When he returns rich and unrecognized, his father murders him for his money. In a way the poem foreshadows *All the King's Men*, *World Enough and Time*, and *Brother to Dragons* in its alternating of narrative and commentary, the former full of doggerel and folklike diction and the other consciously literate and philosophical.

Promises: Poems 1954-1956 (1957) won the Pulitzer Prize. These poems are more emotional and lyrical than the earlier ones,

and the emotion is more personal. They celebrate with mixed joy and apprehension the young lives of Warren's two children, Rosanna and Gabriel. The words *joy* and *hope* appear a little more often, but there is no blinking of the blankness and mindlessness of the world's evil. *Promises* is a group of poems, and it would be incorrect to force too rigid a pattern on its overall coherence. But there are thematic elements which do move toward a unity. Briefly stated, the poems place the children in the context of a ruined Tuscan fortress built by Phillip II of Spain ("Philipus me fecit: he of Spain, the black-browed, the anguished,/For whom nothing prospered, though he loved God"). There, with mingled apprehension and love, the father reviews the indivisible mixture of joy and evil that could, and may, befall them. Thus, past, present, and future are held in a continuum: Europe and its past and present evils; the American past as represented by the living history of the great-grandparents; contemporary vulgarity in Granny and the hog, plus a tentative hope for the future in the happy contemplation of simple things from the father's own boyhood.

You, Emperors, and Others (1960) contains poems that heighten and continue certain elements of the previous collections. Some reviewers found these poems too harsh and/or sordid for their taste, and complained of a lack of the sweetness found in *Promises*. (Should a poet always repeat himself?) It is better to turn to *Selected Poems: New and Old, 1923-1966*. Here are found the longer poems mentioned above. They are the work of a fully matured poet reconsidering and refining the meaning of his life, his attitudes, his history. "Homage to Emerson, on Night Flight to New York" does what the title suggests and balances the view of Emersonianism seen at its harshest, perhaps, in *Band of Angels*. As always, there are things that delight and things to be remembered, big things and little things. I will mention only one. In the middle of a poem about jungle rot, shoes, and the soldiers that wear them, is this: "History is what you can't/Resign from...." That well may be the Warren canon in one and a half lines.

Because of its magnitude and significance, *Brother to Dragons* is the poetic work reserved for final comment in this study. By its very nature it is more enduring and less subject to decay than the other undoubted masterpieces. The concerns, the big themes that loom large, are not radically different from those met with in the novels. The language, the sheer excellence of the writing as *writing*, we more or less expect. In it, as in the novels, are found impressive creation of character; the emphasis on setting, situation, and atmosphere; and the power of history brooding over and working in the present.

The form is perhaps the freest Warren has yet devised. Described as a "play for voices," it is simply that: voices, without stage sets, props, or even a locale or time. The characters are several, some of them famous. Chief among them is Lilburn Lewis and his more famous uncle, Thomas Jefferson. The others are Lilburn's wife, brother, and mother. Present also, acting as interrogator and participant, is a character called R.P.W. Later, Meriwether Lewis appears. The obvious flexibility allows the voices to move freely in time as they speak, commenting on what they know now in contrast to what they did then.

The "plot" is not much as action, since it occurs after the event; but it is profound in its significance. As usual, the event is real and happened at a real time and place. In western Kentucky in 1811 (in that strange time of floods, earthquakes, and plague) two brothers, Lilburn and Isham Lewis, called their slaves together to witness the punishment of George, Lilburn's body servant. As the other slaves watched, Lilburn hacked George to pieces. Warren comments that so far as he could discover, Thomas Jefferson was never able to mention this event or allude to it in his journals or correspondence. The play takes up this question as, one by one, the voices have their say. Jefferson first appears embittered by the fact that his own blood should rob him of his idealized picture of humanity, reflected so convincingly in the Declaration of Independence. The debate on this point widens as Meriwether Lewis comes

to accuse Jefferson of having caused his suicide by teaching him a too-trusting, too-naive view of mankind. Lewis had explored the Far West, but he had found mostly sickness and savagery. Later, while governor of the territory of St. Louis, falsely accused of embezzlement, he committed suicide. Slowly, the principals of *Brother to Dragons* work their way from bitterness and cynicism to a tempered and more realistic view. Unlike other Warren protagonists, these "voices" are able to carry their anguished and painfully won wisdom on into the working world. At one point Jefferson says:

> I think I begin to see the forging of the future.
> It will be forged beneath the hammer of truth
> On the anvil of our anguish. We shall be forged
> Beneath the hammer of truth on the anvil of anguish.
> It would be terrible to think that truth is lost.
> It would be worse to think that anguish is lost, ever (p. 194).

Love, compassion, human glory, virtue: all are necessary. Never at any point is there the suggestion that the effort, the striving, should not be made. Jefferson, as much as any man, made America; and there is never the suggestion that it was better left unmade. There is only the exemplum for all mortal men, present and future, that reason is man's weapon and tool, but reason must be modulated by charity: "... what is any knowledge/Without the intrinsic mediation of the heart?" Also, we must be ready for the worst that can happen:

> We must strike the steel of wrath on the stone of guilt;
> And hope to provoke, thus, in the midst of our coiling
> darkness
> The incandescence of the heart's great flare.
> And in that illumination I should hope to see
> How all creation validates itself,
> For whatever you create, you create yourself by it,
> And in creating yourself you will create
> The whole wide world and gleaming West anew (p. 195).

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